



OVERLOOKED - THE MEN OF THE BIG WOODS

BY REV. WILBURN BULL



A LOG-HAULER AND SLED



THE BEAVER HOUSE



THE man of the "Big Woods" is a man of the world. It was only last Sunday that we were talking with Lewis. He had come in for lunch from the jam on which the drivers had been working, and just a few weeks before he had returned from Scotland, where he had been working with the mill units getting out lumber for the Allies. These men travel back and forth from one end of the continent to the other, and even across the seas. Travel does not count in their lives. Stop one and ask him where his home is, and he will look at you in rather a surprised way and reply, "Oh, anywhere!" When they are going to a camp, no matter where, it is for them a sail into the "Harbor of Home, Sweet Home."

Among the lumbermen are to be found men who have



THE WINTER CAMP



THE "BOSS"

never had a chance and you will also find those who have had every opportunity. There are men with college educations or with professional training, business-trained men and mechanics. Many there are like old Pat McIvor. We discovered him first in one of the tents in the camp at "Four Mile Brook." Over the flap of the tent was the sign, "Police Court." Old Pat was "Judge" and he ruled the boys with a strong hand. Nearly a year later we found Pat again. We were in a barber shop when he came in drunk. A few days later we were canvassing for the Red Triangle Fund and although he had not worked for several weeks and was recovering from a long illness, Pat wanted to help the boys "Over there," so he borrowed a quarter to send a bit of cheer to the lads in khaki. The last heard of him he was in the hospital.

Drugs and drink had made him the black sheep of a good family.

Probably the best work in the lumber regions is done by the men who have lived near the woods all their lives. Many of the boys are not more than sixteen or seventeen when they hear the call of the wild, "jack" school, and start for a winter in the woods. From that time on they spend the greater part of their lives there. In the winter they are in the lumber camps, and in the summer and fall they guide the "sports" who come to hunt and fish. These are the men the boss likes to have in his crew. To some extent the native woodsmen are being displaced by men from the cities and by the French-Canadians. These last are also men of the woods, good-natured and easy-going. So in the great lumber regions are to be found men from the cities who have been shipped into the woods by city employment agencies, the native woodsmen, and last, but not least, the French-Canadians.

A visit to a lumber camp is full of real interest. The summer camps used by the crews who are engaged in peeling pulp may be of a light frame covered with bark. The winter camps, as a rule consisting of four buildings, are of logs. There is the cook-room, where the food is prepared and eaten. Connected with the cook-room by a passage-way called "the dingle" is the bunk-room. There is a smaller cabin, sometimes called "the beaver-house," where the clerks and scalers stay, and which may contain a little store called "the wangan." The stable, or in the language of the woods, "the hovel," is the largest of these buildings.



THE POPULAR COOK

In many ways the life in the woods is pleasant during the winter time. The work is carried on under healthful conditions. Sometimes the wife and children are there to make a cozy home, or if they are not, there is plenty of good company to be found among the members of the crew. If you are doubtful as to whether the food is good and plentiful, walk into the camp some day and find out for yourself. Get some good beans right out of the "bean-hole," some cold sliced meat, some prunes, sugar cookies, a doughnut, and a big tin cup full of coffee or tea. Then, if you do not eat enough to make you feel more like sitting around for awhile instead of taking an axe and chopping down trees, you had better consult the nearest doctor.

The sleeping conditions are the greatest drawback to



SECOND LUNCH

life in the woods. The crew sleeps in one room, several men in a bunk, one row of bunks above another, with too little ventilation and too much "company." The "company" consists of visitors, small in size, but with large possibilities for making one restless and uncomfortable.

As you walk out from the camp you may hear the shout, "Heads up!" It is well to look out, for a tree is about to fall. One or two more pulls on the saw (for trees are sawed now rather than chopped) and the giant is down. The limbers then get busy and trim out its branches and cut it into the right lengths, after which the teamsters twitch it out and "yard" it up, where it remains until it is loaded onto the log-haulers and taken directly to the mill or is carried off

to the landing on the bank of the stream, ready for the spring drive.

The men may get through cutting rather early in the season if the snow gets too deep to work to advantage. They are then obliged to wait for the breaking up of winter, when the streams will open once more and all will be ready for the drive. This is one of the most picturesque parts of the lumberjacks' work. It is full of risk and adventure. It means work from daylight till dark seven days a week. It means sleeping in wet clothes in a tent pitched beside a stream. However, there is a fascination about it all which the lumberman finds it hard to resist at the coming of spring. He does not need to leave the woods after the drive, but may hire out to peel pulp during the summer. Most of us would



LOW WATER AT THE DAM

prefer to be elsewhere. The logs are pitchy and very sticky, the woods are close and warm, and the flies swarm everywhere. But again the lure of the wild is hard to resist.

We speak of these men of the big woods as "overlooked," because so little Christian work is being done for them in the camps. The priest makes his trips among the French-Canadians, and the Presbyterian church has one missionary at work in the woods of northern New England. The Y. M. C. A., in connection with the churches, has done a little here and there, and there is no doubt that a work similar to that being done by them in the army camps would be very helpful to the woodsman. If huts could be located in some of the larger camps or at the points where the men come out of the woods, we know not how many crooked lives might be made straight, and how many dollars—the earnings of a season of hard work—might be saved for the family at home or spent in some useful way.

We have overlooked these thousands of men long enough. Up in the woods, away from the lure of the evils of the cities, many a life is open to thoughts which would be crowded out another time. There is need for men who will devote their lives to work among these lumbermen and there are others who can help them. Sewing circles can make comfort bags and send them. Young people's societies can collect magazines and good literature to send to them. In some communities club rooms might be opened on the edge of the woods, but in order to do this, help must come from the outside. The

churches in these lumber districts are struggling themselves, and in this larger work they would have to be backed by the richer congregations of the cities. Certainly the field before us is large. Let us no longer overlook the men of the big woods, but reach out and help much good manhood that has perhaps started in the wrong direction.

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